

Illinois Fall Color Report – September 23, 2021



Virginia creeper

Northern Illinois

As expected for the first report of the fall season, fall colors are just starting to show in some locations. Sumac is spotty, with flameleaf nearly done with shades of dark maroon. Staghorn is starting to show yellowing and some reds and pinks coming in. Black walnut trees are defoliating, although not necessarily due to fall. This is most likely a combination of ongoing drought, recent high winds, and the beginning of leaf drop due to fewer hours of daylight. Washed out yellow is popping up where visible amongst the other trees. Catalpa is starting to yellow, as are cottonwoods and quaking aspen. Blackhaw viburnum, common witchhazel, hazelnut, and fringetree are starting to show yellowing. Oaks and hickories haven't started their colors yet.

Central Illinois

In the countryside and in town, trees and plants are just beginning to realize it is autumn. In most places in the region, there isn't much color out there, yet. Cottonwoods, black walnuts, and various other species are showing some yellow shades. There are a few ornamental and understory trees that have begun to turn (mostly yellows). Large hardwood trees remain green. In some locations, black walnuts are beginning to show yellow in areas that are drier and some cottonwoods are a dull yellow.

In west central Illinois, drought stress has caused some trees and plants to turn early and drop leaves. Virginia creeper is one plant that changed to crimson very early and started losing leaves. Walnut trees in some areas are yellowing and dropping leaves. Cottonwoods and silver maples are also yellowing, with some cottonwoods browning and dropping leaves from drought and heat stress. A few sugar maples are

starting to show bits of orange and red, while tulip poplars are showing some yellows. Cool nights this week should begin to ramp up the seasonal colors in the days ahead.

Southern Illinois

In southern Illinois, observers report things are still mainly green. A few basswood trees are turning and some bottomland trees are showing some yellow colors. A few red maples are starting to turn in select locations. Some cool nights recently may start the process toward more fall color to report in the next couple of weeks.